# Business Watch

Internal Theft

Internal theft is a problem in many industries. Unethical staff may "subsidize" their salary in many ways. A stock clerk may save discarded customer receipts and use them to show that stolen goods were "paid for." Janitorial staff may conceal office equipment in the trash and return later to pick it up. A "dependable" employee may conduct the methodical theft of merchandise and money, sometimes several thousand dollars worth, until the employee is caught.

Most employees are honest—but even managers with the best employees shouldn't ignore the possibility of internal theft. Read on for a few precautions you can take to reduce the opportunity for employee theft at your business.

Screen Your Applicants
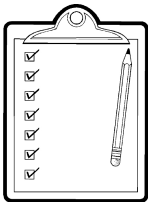
Most apartment complexes conduct background checks on people who want to reside at their property; why wouldn't you conduct a similar check on employees you will trust with your customers and your business? Background checks can be conducted through a screening company, and Washington state criminal history can be obtained by going to www.watch.wsp.wa.gov. Contact references and ask questions that target issues relevant to crime in your industry.

Key Control

Never leave office keys in the lock, in an unlocked drawer, or anywhere they can be "borrowed" and duplicated. Keep detailed records of key distribution. If keys are issued to employees, the keys should be signed out at the beginning of each shift and returned at the end of shift. Conduct daily and weekly audits of keys. If an employee who had access to keys leaves under less than favorable terms, have locks re-keyed.

Cash Control

Close the register drawer after every transaction, and ensure the register cannot be opened by non-employees (remove the key, don't post access codes, etc.) Provide receipts, and require verification by a manager of voided sales or over/under–rings. Don't allow multiple employees to conduct transactions out of a single cash drawer. Conduct surprise cash counts. Make bank deposits frequently, and vary your procedures for making deposits (i.e. time of day, person carrying the deposit, type of container used to carry cash, etc.) Keep only the minimum amount of cash necessary to conduct business in the cash drawer to limit the amount that can be accessed by employees. Bank deposits should be stored in a locked safe until the deposit can be made. Access to the safe should be limited to the fewest possible number of employees.

Commercial Robberies
April through June

COMMERCIAL ROBBERY / ROBBERY ON BUSINESS PROPERTY:		**LOSS**
3000 block NE Sunset Blvd. 7:00 p.m.	The suspect approached the register with a pack of gum. As the employee opened the cash register, the suspect pulled up his jacket to reveal a gun and threatened to shoot the employee if she didn't give him all the money. The suspect reached over the counter and started removing the money himself, dropped some of the money, became angry, and waived the gun at the employee. A K9 track located a possible suspect, but the employee could not positively identify him as the robber.	$198
1200 block SW 43rd St 9:00 p.m.	Officers responding to a panic alarm were advised that the business had actually been robbed. The suspect approached the sales counter, pulled a handgun out of his jacket, pointed it at the employee, and demanded money. The employee handed over the money from the register, and the suspect fled. A K9 search did not locate the suspect.	$136
1300 block N 30th St 3:44 a.m.	The suspect entered the business wearing a mask over his face and cloth over his hands. He pulled out a handgun and yelled for the employee to give him money. The employee gave him the money and explained that there wasn't much because it had already been dropped into the safe. The suspect demanded two packs of cigarettes and fled. A K9 track led to a nearby park and ride lot, where the suspect possibly had a vehicle waiting. The employee refused to complete a written statement at the time of the incident, stating he needed to serve the customers.	$62
17600 block 108th Ave SE 1:37 p.m.	The suspect handed the employee a note demanding money and stating that he had a gun. The employee provided cash, and the suspect fled in a vehicle.	$2,402
3100 block NE Sunset Blvd 8:27 p.m.	Officers responded to a robbery of Oxycontin that had just occurred. The suspect leaned over the counter and demanded Oxycontin, and threatened to come over the counter if the employees didn't hurry. The suspect placed the medication in a bag he had brought with him and ran out the door. A K9 track was unsuccessful.	$902
11100 block SE Petrovitsky Rd 1:10 a.m.	Officers responded to a report of a fight. The victim was located in the area, bleeding from the mouth and not wearing any shoes. He stated he had picked up a fare, who had not paid his fare, and robbed him. Officers were unable to locate the suspect.	$166
700 block SW 4th Pl 10:10 a.m.	The suspect asked to look at a catalog, followed the employee behind the counter, opened a drawer and yelled for money. The suspect punched the victim, knocking her about ten feet, before grabbing the victim's purse and fleeing on foot. The victim's car was later stolen from her residence. Investigation revealed a suspect, who will be charged with Robbery 1st Degree.	$100
100 block SW 7th St 9:19 p.m.	A male subject entered the building wearing a ski mask covering his face. The subject walked around the counter while pointing a handgun at the employee, and opened the cash register by using a specific button, The suspect took the cash drawer and the money underneath the drawer and fled on foot. A K9 track was conducted with negative results, as it appeared the suspect left in a vehicle. Officers checked for latent fingerprints on the cash register button, but it had been used by employees after the robbery.	$2,000
17300 block 121st Ln SE 12:09 a.m.	A delivery driver reported that he had been robbed. When he arrived to make the delivery he was approached by three subjects, one of whom tried to push him over. When the victim did not fall, the suspect punched him repeatedly in the face before grabbing the delivery and running. A K9 track did not locate the suspects.	$135
300 block Burnett Ave S 11:30 a.m.	Attempted robbery. The employee stated she had noticed the suspect in line; he was fidgeting and allowed other customers to go in front of him so that he would be served by this employee. The suspect mumbled something the employee couldn't hear, then presented a note demanding money. The employee pretended she couldn't read the note and tried to get the note from him, but he pulled it back. The suspect again verbally demanded money, and the employee pretended she couldn't hear him. The suspect left, stating he would go rob another business (and he did!)	$0

Robbery Prevention for Businesses

Robbery Facts:

A first time "good haul" will increase the likelihood of your business getting hit again.

The majority of robberies involve either the threat or use of a weapon, making this business crime the most dangerous to employees and customers.

Providing superior customer service is not only good for business, it can help prevent robberies. Criminals don't like to have personal interaction with employees, since the employee may remember the suspect and later be able to identify him.

The previous page lists several robberies that occurred in Renton during the second quarter of this year. What can you and your employees do to help protect your customers and your business?

PHYSICAL DETERRENTS

- Keep cash at a minimum, and post signs indicating "no more than $50 in register" (or similar). A lucrative first robbery will encourage repeated robberies.
- Keep the interior of the business and all entrances well lit
- Never block display windows with signs or merchandise, which will shield the robber's actions from potential witnesses
- Mark the edge of the doorway at varying heights, such as every 12 inches, to help in estimating the suspect's height
- Maintenance and upkeep of your security system should be a priority

OPENING AND CLOSING PROCEDURES

- Two employees should open and close the business. One person should go in, check the business for anything suspicious, and then alert the employee waiting outside using a pre-arranged signal.
- Be alert to any suspicious persons or vehicles in the area of the business
- When closing, check the interior of the business for persons who may be hiding inside. Be sure to check restrooms, closets, and storage rooms.
- Keep a spare key in any room in which employees may be locked during a robbery.
- Walk-in refrigerators are of special concern; a robber may force employees inside and block the door to prevent their escape.
- Do not allow customers to enter the store during non-business hours.

BANK DEPOSIT PROCEDURES

- Consider using an armored transport service if your business accumulates large amounts of cash.
- Make frequent deposits; a build-up of cash will result in a more serious loss in the event of a robbery or burglary
- Do not "advertise" that you are carrying the bank deposit. ("Joe, I'm going to the bank!")
- Avoid wearing a nametag or clothing advertising your business when you are carrying the deposit
- Make deposits during daylight hours
- Go directly to the bank. Do not make other stops along the way, and never leave deposits unattended in a vehicle.
- If possible, two employees should make the deposit. There is safety in numbers.
- Vary the time, route and method of transport (lunch bag, shopping bag, grocery bag) when carrying the deposits

Robbery Prevention, continued

POLICIES AND TRAINING

All businesses should establish clearly defined policies regarding:

- Cash handling procedures
- Opening and closing methods
- Bank deposits
- Procedures for responding to thefts, robberies, suspicious persons or activities
- Reporting suspicious or criminal activity to police
- Safety of employees and security of equipment and merchandise

Training must be:

- Designed to ensure all employees know the company policies
- Conducted as soon as possible for new employees, and repeated on a regular basis for all employees
- Specific for your business type and business site

All employees should be provided with copies of policies and procedures they are expected to know and practice.
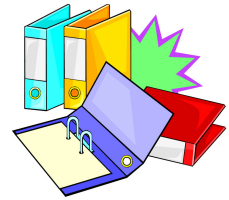
Attention Security Personnel & Loss Prevention Professionals:

Are you interested in learning more about local criminal activity and trends? The **Eastside Security Forum** may be for you!

The Eastside Security Forum is composed of representatives from law enforcement and security personnel of businesses located on Seattle's east side. The Forum members meet on a quarterly basis. All businesses located within or doing business on Seattle's east side (including Renton!) are encouraged to join and attend the meetings.

Purpose of the Forum: Community oriented policing requires cooperative public / private partnerships between the police and the community, and private sector security is a natural partner. Multi-dimensional crimes such as computer fraud, organized retail theft, and white collar crimes are on the rise—and solutions require the efforts of both public and private entities. The police can provide crime trend information, access to law enforcement records, special legal powers, and extensive training. Private security can provide special-topic expertise and resources, including personnel and equipment, that public entities with constant budget restraints cannot hope to provide. The Eastside Security Forum brings these two sectors together for information exchange, specialized training, collaboration on specific projects, and networking between security and police representatives. The Forum also serves to educate both sides on their concerns and difficulties in dealing with crime in the area. In the past, the Forum has featured training on terrorism, violence in the workplace, and white-collar crime trends. The ongoing goal of the Eastside Security Forum is to reduce crime and safety within the business community.

Future of the Forum: The Eastside Security Forum hopes to increase participation and information sharing by all businesses in the area. We also aim to identify mutually beneficial training opportunities and safety strategies for participating forum members and to increase communications systems between business / security managers and police personnel on all levels.

How to get involved: The next quarterly meeting will take place in September. If you'd like to attend, please contact Terri Vickers via email to tvickers@rentonwa.gov or by phone to 425-430-7520 for additional details and to be added to the list of invitees.

Internal Theft (continued)

Inventory Control

Limit employee access to stock and to inventory records. Occasionally check trash bins for merchandise that may have been concealed by an employee who intends to remove it at a later time. Conduct periodic, unexpected inventory checks so dishonest employees know they risk being caught by surprise. Require employees to keep their personal items in transparent bags while at work, reducing the possibility of concealing merchandise in a purse or duffle bag.

Job Functions

Separate purchasing, receiving, and accounting roles to reduce the autonomy in any one job. When two or more people are involved in a particular function, they would have to work together to defraud your business.

Purchasing

Centralize the purchasing function. Control purchase orders by pre-numbering them (in sequence), and get supporting documentation for each purchase. Use pre-numbered checks, so that all expenditures can be tracked in sequence.

Receiving

Create and control a specific area for receiving. Count and weigh all materials and compare the results with the shipping documents. Use pre-numbered receiving control forms to record shipments. Assign two people to verify each shipment received. A "witness" will often make an employee, who is considering illegal activity, reconsider. Vary the employees who will "witness" receiving activity.
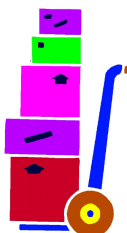
Shipping

Use one employee to assemble an order and another to check and pack it. This will minimize the opportunity for theft, and reduce errors. Seal cartons, and check merchandise as it is loaded. Maintain records of stock movements. Conduct frequent inventories.

Utility Bill Scam

Earlier this month a resident contacted our Finance office to report that someone had come to her door trying to collect on her utility bill—and the person knew the exact amount of the bill. Because the suspect knew how much the bill was, it is possible that the resident's mail had also been tampered with.

There are no circumstances under which City employees collect utility bills or other City fees by going door-to-door. If you observe suspicious activity near a mailbox or encounter a person claiming to be collecting for utility bills, please dial 9-1-1 and provide a description of the subject/s, their vehicle, and any other information that will assist in locating the subject/s.

CITY CONTACT INFORMATION

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Information Desk	430-6400	City of Renton	Business Watch	430-7520
Economic Development	430-6592	www.rentonwa.gov	Block Watch	430-7521
Fire Prevention	430-7080		School Resource Officers	430-7514
Human Services	430-6650		Police Administration	430-7535
City Clerk	430-6504	Renton Chamber of Commerce	Graffiti Abatement	430-7373
Utility Systems	430-6234		Animal Control	430-7550
Finance	430-6850	www.gorenton.com	Community Services	430-6600

Citizen's Police Academy Begins September 15!

Have you ever been interested in how the Police Department really works? Do you wonder what officers do during their shift? Is the reality of police work anything at all like C.S.I.? Come and find out!

The 45th session of the Renton Police Department's Citizen's Academy begins on September 15, and will meet for twelve weeks on Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m.

Scheduled classes include Patrol Operations, Investigations, Use of Force, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), Hostage Negotiations, Gangs in Renton, and K-9 demonstrations. There will also be a tour of the Jail and Communications Center, and a ride-along with a patrol officer. Graduates of our Citizen's Academy are periodically invited to attend Advanced Citizen's Academy classes and other police events.
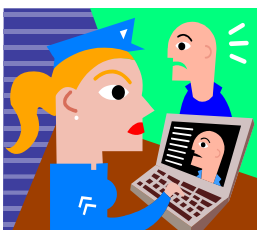
Curious? Sound interesting? Download an application from the City's website at www.rentonwa.gov or call 425-430-7520 to have an application mailed to you. Class size is limited to 25 students and applications must be received by August 28th. Those who live or work in Renton may be given priority. Applicants must be 18 years old to attend, and a background check will be conducted on all applicants. Criminal history or adverse contacts with police may preclude acceptance to Citizen's Academy.